Twentieth Century British History, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2013, pp. 224–248 doi:10.1093/tcbh/hws012

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'Fish-and-Chip Intelligence': Henry Durant and the British Institute of Public Opinion, 1936–63

Abstract

In 1937, a year after 'scientific' opinion polling began in America, the Gallup Poll came to Britain. The British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), owned and managed by Henry Durant, was Gallup's first overseas affiliate. Although BIPO was a profit-making concern, Durant operated the business for more than profit. He was a sincere believer in polling's potential to democratize government and business. Like his mentor Gallup, Durant fell short of his stated aims. The sample survey was not a precision tool for 'taking the pulse of democracy'. It contained irredeemable flaws that homogenized the private opinions of a skewed cross-section of British society, while commercial pressures forced Durant to make trade-offs between cost and quality, and clients' needs and best survey practice.

'How far does the British Institute of Public Opinion [BIPO] reflect the true opinion of the country?' asked 'Junius' in January 1942. Junius, author of the Press Gang column in the socialist political weekly *Tribune*, did not believe the findings of a Gallup Poll published in the *News Chronicle* that gave the Prime Minister an approval rating of 89 per cent. How could Winston Churchill's stock stand higher in the country than ever before with the fall of Singapore to the Japanese seemingly imminent? Unable to accept the findings, Junius challenged BIPO to explain its methods and financial arrangements.[1] A week later,

*mark.roodhouse@york.ac.uk. The author would like to thank the editors for their patience and advice, and the anonymous referees for pointed and useful criticisms. This is a better article as a result. Thanks also to Alison Kelly for sharing her memories of her father with me.

[1] Junius, 'Press Gang', *Tribune*, 30 January 1942.

Advance Access publication 23 May 2012

Tribune printed a lengthy reply from the institute's owner and director Henry Durant, which he had founded in 1937 as the first overseas affiliate of George Gallup's American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO). Durant stressed his ties with Gallup and explained how BIPO 'found' public opinion. He focused on how the institute collected data, but said nothing about its collation, analysis, or dissemination. He also ignored pointed questions about the nature of his business.[2]

Like George Gallup, Durant promoted the Gallup Poll as a way for voters to influence government policy between elections. The result would be better policy and an end to political apathy.[3] Durant's commitment to Gallup's vision of a democratic science of polling, not commercial confidentiality, explains his reluctance to answer Junius's pointed questions about BIPO finances. Doing so was likely to encourage *Tribune* readers to dismiss his work as tainted by commercialism. The institute's relationship with the *News Chronicle*, a Liberal national daily owned by the Cadbury family, had already roused suspicions about the Gallup Poll's objectivity.[4] Durant's silence and the absence of a BIPO archive mean that Junius's questions about the science and business of polling in Britain remain unanswered. Addressing them is vital as historians rely heavily upon BIPO data in their accounts of life in mid-century Britain. As Peter Mandler puts it, 'The more we mine social science the more we need to fathom it—that is to incorporate its own history into our own.'[5]

Durant believed that perfecting survey methods would enable him to realize Gallup's dream of modern mass democracy made possible through polling. Durant's belief in the political, sociological, and historical value of the sample survey was unswerving. Writing in 1959—four years before a heart attack forced him to sell the firm—Durant expressed the view that when sample surveys are 'combined with digital computers, they become a psychological X-ray, probing beneath the surface of behaviour and habit, laying bare the foundation and structure of our views and preferences and attitudes'.[6]

Yet, the day-to-day problems Durant encountered in running BIPO ensured that he fell short of his stated aims. As Durant admitted, the professional researcher seldom 'had an opportunity of designing a survey in exactly the way he would like to see it done, of totaling up

[2] H. Durant, 'Finding Public Opinion', *Tribune*, 20 February 1942.
[3] H. Durant, *What Britain Thinks: The Technique of Public Opinion Measurement* (London, 1939), 16–17.
[4] Laura Beers, 'Whose Opinion? Changing Attitudes towards Opinion Polling in British Politics, 1937–1964', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17 (2006), 177–205, at 187–8.
[5] P. Mandler, 'Being His Own Rabbit: Geoffrey Gorer and English Culture', in C. V. J. Griffiths et al., eds, *Classes, Cultures, and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford, 2010), 192.
[6] H. Durant, 'Sampling Public Opinion', *Financial Times*, 19 September 1959, 6.

his bill at the end and having it met by a client'.[7] BIPO surveys were always the result of compromises between cost and quality, clients' needs, and current best practice. After money, the biggest challenge facing Durant was controlling interviewers in the field—a classic example of the 'principal-agent' problem. Gallup and his rival Elmo Roper, according to Sarah Igo, failed for much the same reasons.[8]

Gallup Comes to Britain

In October 1938, the *News Chronicle* announced a 'great new venture' with BIPO to 'discover, with accuracy and without bias, what Britain thinks'.[9] After 'a careful investigation into the aims and methods of the British Institute', the newspaper purchased the exclusive rights to publish the findings of the Gallup Poll in Great Britain and the British Empire with the exception of Canada.[10] The *News Chronicle* believed that 'unmuzzled public opinion', gauged by BIPO and reported by the paper, could permanently influence British foreign policy.[11]

Although the publication of the Gallup Poll in a national daily newspaper marked the arrival of opinion polling on the British political scene, the history of opinion polling in Britain began two years earlier on 17 August 1936 when Harry Field disembarked from the *Queen Mary* at Southampton.[12] Field, who emigrated to the United States in 1919, returned to Britain tasked with setting up a British version of George Gallup's AIPO, which was to be the first overseas affiliate in the 'Gallup family'.[13] Founded a year earlier, AIPO conducted sample surveys of public opinion, the results of which were published in a syndicated column 'America Speaks'.

Britain was the obvious location for Gallup's first overseas venture as the British market was broadly similar to the American one, thanks to a shared history and culture. Gallup, who had only two years' high school German and one year high school French,[14] felt he understood

[7] H. Durant, 'The Gallup Poll and Some of Its Problems', *Incorporated Statistician*, 5 (1954), 101–12, at 101.

[8] S. E. Igo, ' "A Gold Mine and A Tool for Democracy": George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and the Business of Scientific Polling, 1935–1955', *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*, 42 (2006), 109–34.

[9] *News Chronicle*, 15 October 1938, 1.

[10] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 4.

[11] *News Chronicle*, 17 October 1938, 1.

[12] The National Archives: Public Record Office (TNA: PRO), Kew, BT 26/1108/28, UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960, 17 August 1936. <http://www.ancestorsonboard.com/> accessed 11 April 2011.

[13] 'In Memoriam: Harry Hubert Field (1897–1946)', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10 (1946), 399.

[14] Columbia Center for Oral History, New York, NXCP89-A34, Interview with George Gallup, interviewed by Frank Rounds, 15 March 1962, transcript, 7.

Britain, which he had visited twice since 1933.[15] Britain's empire was a further draw as success in the imperial metropole was likely to pave the way for rapid global expansion.

Although the decision to locate Gallup's first overseas affiliate in Britain is readily understood, the motive for Field's assignment is unclear as neither man left an account of the British mission while Durant's published reminiscences pass over this aspect of the mission. Recent work downplays Gallup's interest in research methods and his commitment to polling as a social enterprise, which contemporary critics dismissed as sales rhetoric, stressing his business interests instead.[16]

Nevertheless, Gallup's instructions to his emissary suggest that he conducted the BIPO venture for more than profit. All Gallup demanded of his British affiliate was free and unlimited access to its data, full cooperation in cross-national surveys from time to time and exclusive rights to publish British poll findings in North America. In return Gallup granted his affiliate the right to market the Gallup Poll in Britain. He also promised to provide free training and advice in the science and business of polling.[17] This was not a standard franchise agreement involving the payment of fees, royalties, or a share of the profits to Gallup.

Regardless of the strength of Gallup's commitment to his academic and social goals, it was Field's commitment to them that mattered, as he was to recruit and train Gallup's British associate. His faith in polling was deeper than that of his boss. In 1941, Field left AIPO to found the National Opinion Research Centre (NORC) at the University of Denver after becoming increasingly frustrated with the constraints that the need to produce a lively and readable newspaper column placed on survey research.[18] At NORC he tried to realize the dream of a democratic science, an ideal that he felt Gallup had strayed from, by conducting research into polling methods and conducting polls at cost for politicians, government, educators, and charities.[19]

Confirming his academic bent, Field began his search for a British partner at the London School of Economics (LSE) rather than trying to interest a newspaper in founding an institute. The press route was a

[15] TNA: PRO, BT 26/1023/87 and BT 26/1080/35, UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960, 25 May 1933 and 14 June 1935. <http://www.ancestorsonboard.com/> accessed 11 April 2011.

[16] Igo, 'A Gold Mine', 115; S. Ohmer, *George Gallup in Hollywood* (New York, 2006), 51–76.

[17] See B. Chappell, 'Founding Fathers: Henry Durant', *Market Research Society Newsletter*, 157 and 158 (1979) for a two-part edited transcript of his oral history interview with Durant.

[18] 'Academic Pollsters', *Time*, 15 September 1941; Jeff Hackett, ed., *America by Number: National Opinion Research Center Fiftieth Anniversary Report* (Chicago, 1993), 1–2.

[19] 'Academic Pollsters', *Time*, 15 September 1941.

feasible alternative. In fact newspaper proprietors were instrumental in the creation of both the Australian and Canadian institutes a few years later.[20] Rather than turn a journalist into a survey researcher, Field chose to turn a researcher into a social entrepreneur. As inter-war Britain's pre-eminent centre for teaching and research in the social sciences, the LSE was the obvious place to begin the search. Without British academic contacts, Field approached the LSE Appointments Bureau and was given six names, one of which was that of the 34-year-old research student Henry Durant.[21] Field settled on Durant as he combined a passion for social science with strong political convictions, fifteen years' actuarial experience, and an entrepreneurial attitude.[22]

Pragmatic considerations played their part in Durant's decision to accept Field's offer. When Field approached him, Durant was two years into a PhD on the use of leisure. By accepting it, Durant, a mature student who had no fear of figures thanks to his actuarial experience, got exclusive access to a powerful new method of social investigation that he could use in his academic research. Without a private income or scholarship to support him and his wife, who was also a research student, Durant had to spend his evenings lecturing at adult education colleges.[23] Any doubts that he harboured about Field's offer disappeared when it was explained to him that he could earn up to £150 a year working part-time from home.[24] This would allow him to pursue an academic career as a sociologist.

Although Durant was an impecunious doctoral student with a wife to support, political idealism is as important as pragmatism in explaining his decision to take up polling. Gallup's democratic vision of polling, as expounded by Field, appealed to this son of a warehouseman. Although he lost his London accent while a scholarship boy at Christ's Hospital, Durant identified himself as working class. If anything, his experiences as a 'charity case' at the school strengthened this identification. Able to get a middle-class clerical job because of his education, he spent his days at the Prudential offices in the City, returning to the working-class milieu of Bermondsey in the evening. These formative experiences left him with a clear sense of the barriers

[20] S. Mills, 'Polling, Politics and the Press, 1941–1996', in A. Curthoys and J. Schultz, eds, *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture* (Brisbane, 1999), 205–17; D. J. Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy: Polling, Market Research, and Public Life, 1930–1945* (Buffalo, 1999).

[21] Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 14.

[22] M. Roodhouse, 'Durant, Henry William (1902–1982)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, October 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/94322, accessed 16 March 2009].

[23] Roodhouse, 'Durant'.

[24] R. M. Worcester, 'The Internationalisation of Public Opinion Research', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51 (1987), S79–S85.

to social mobility and the limits to interaction between classes. In looking for a solution to these problems he dallied with Marxism and joined the Labour Party. The Gallup Poll, as presented by Field, promised to give voice to the views of working people without need of a revolution or a Labour government—both dim prospects in 1936.[25]

Although the practicalities of running a research organization absorbed much of his time, Durant's commitment to Gallup's gospel, as espoused by Field, was deep and abiding. He imitated Gallup's persona and rhetoric. In articles and pamphlets touting the institute's work, Durant lionized 'Dr Gallup' and preached the social benefits of the Gallup Poll.[26] He borrowed Gallup's arguments, examples, and phrases in order to explain how Gallup's 'scientific' method made it possible to 'take the pulse of democracy' between elections. Like the prophet himself, Durant quoted James Bryce on public opinion, holding up the Gallup Poll as the fulfilment of Bryce's hope that one day 'the will of the majority of citizens' could be 'ascertained at all times'.[27]

Channelling Gallup, Durant argued that the opinion poll re-introduced an element of direct democracy, as practiced in ancient Greek city-states or the town meeting, into mass democracies. BIPO's logo, a black-and-white line drawing of Big Ben's clock face, underlined the importance of this political mission. Although Durant stuck closely to Gallup's arguments, he used British examples to win over his readers. Before the Second World War, Durant hoped to tap into disillusion with the National Government's conduct of foreign policy. The 1935 Peace Ballot or the press furore over the Hoare–Laval pact influenced British foreign policy temporarily, but, he argued, the public could exert enduring influence over foreign policy by means of the ongoing Gallup Poll.[28]

Durant demonstrated an abiding faith in Gallup's vision by helping to set up other Gallup affiliates and organize pollsters into professional bodies after 1945. Durant supported Jan Stapel, co-founder of the Dutch institute, and Eric da Costa, founder of the Indian institute, in much the same way as Field had helped him.[29] In May 1947, he hosted the first international conference of all twelve Gallup affiliates at Loxwood Hall in Sussex, which led to the creation of the Gallup International Association.[30] As founding president of the Market Research Society,

[25] Roodhouse, 'Durant'.
[26] H. Durant and W. Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll* (London, 1951), 1–3.
[27] See Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 2.
[28] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 16–17.
[29] J. Dixon, 'Eric P. W. da Costa: Polling Pioneer of India', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 18 (2006), 119–26.
[30] 'Special News Notes: Gallup Institutes confer in England', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 11 (1947), 319–21.

Durant also took a lead role in the professionalization of the industry in Britain.[31]

In addition, Durant was involved in international networks, sitting on the editorial board of the early *Public Opinion Quarterly* and attending the first international conference on public opinion research in 1946. At the conference he joined the Sponsoring Committee to organize a second conference 2 years later. He attended the second conference, which gave birth to the World Congress for Public Opinion Research (WCPOR).[32] In autumn 1946, he convened a meeting of British pollsters to encourage them to get involved.[33] A year later Durant helped found the European Society for Public Opinion and Marketing Research, which he became president of some years later.[34]

Of course, all this 'altruistic' activity could be explained away as a case of enlightened self-interest.[35] As Harry Henry, another pioneering market researcher, recalled, 'We desperately needed to get together to exchange information, to work together, to learn our business together.' 'We needed to be able to present our credentials to the business world, to speak together on behalf of this infant science.'[36] Yet, Durant's obvious interest in working with others to build the industry's reputation and expand the domestic market for their services cannot explain his international activities, which took Durant away from the institute for extended periods of time. Durant was a true believer in polling as a social enterprise and was willing to sacrifice profit to spread the word.

For Durant the title 'doctor' was more than a marketing device. In the run-up to elections, interviewers noted his interest in the development and application of the latest survey methods.[37] His concern with method was sincere. Durant worked closely with statisticians at the LSE to develop survey methods during the 1950s.[38]

[31] C. McDonald and S. King, *Sampling the Universe: The Growth, Development and Influence of Market Research in Britain since 1945* (Henley-on-Thames, 1996), 25.

[32] *Proceedings of the Central City Conference on Public Opinion* Research (Denver, CO, 1946), 106 [http://www.norc.org/PDFs/publications/Central_City_Conference_1946.pdf, accessed 10 November 2011]; C. W. Hart and D. Cahalan, 'The Development of AAPOR', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21 (1957), 165–73, at 168.

[33] S. C. Dodds, 'Toward World Surveying', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10 (1946/7), 470–83, at 477.

[34] 'News Notes: European Opinion Research Society founded in Amsterdam', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 12 (1948), 578.

[35] See S. Nixon, 'In Pursuit of the Professional Ideal: UK Advertising and the Construction of Commercial Expertise 1953–64', in P. Jackson et al., eds, *Commercial Cultures: Economies, Practices, Spaces* (Oxford, 2000), 55–74.

[36] Cited in McDonald and King, *Sampling the Universe*, 27.

[37] 'Election Forecasts', *Picture Post*, 21 July 1945, 22; J. Winocour, 'Feeling the Voter's Pulse', *Public Opinion*, 10 February 1950, 8; Pendennis, 'The Election Doctors', *The Observer*, 15 March 1964, 12.

[38] J. Durbin and A. Stuart, 'Differences in Response Rates of Experienced and Inexperienced Interviewers', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 114 (1951), 163–206; C. A. Moser, 'Quota Sampling', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 115

There was more to this involvement with academic research than seeking personal and professional respectability. Durant placed his field force at the disposal of political scientists without charge and allowed them to access BIPO data for free if their research interested him. Early psephologists owed much to him.[39] His interest in social science also overcame personal differences as Durant continued to help his ex-wife Ruth with her research.[40] He also allowed staff to publish academic papers based on BIPO data.[41]

Despite running BIPO as a profit-making concern, it is clear that Durant conducted the business for more than profit. In this it bears comparison with Mass-Observation (M-O). Both M-O and BIPO aimed to discover what 'the man in the street' thought and how he lived. Their founders planned to share their findings with the people they studied by publishing their results in the press. This, they thought, would challenge conventional ways of gauging public opinion through the press, political meetings, constituency correspondence, and political 'surgeries'; methods which they believed misrepresented majority views. In doing so they would make British society more democratic.[42]

This similarity is easily overlooked as they set about discovering public opinion in different ways. BIPO analysed quantitative data collected using sample surveys, whereas M-O studied qualitative data obtained through ethnographic methods and panel research. Competing for public attention and financial backing, rivalry was inevitable with each organization denigrating the other's methods.[43] What the two

(1952), 411–23; C. A. Moser and A. Stuart, 'An Experimental Study of Quota Sampling', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 116 (1953), 349–405; J. Durbin and A. Stuart, 'Callbacks and Clustering in Sample Surveys: An Experimental Study', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 117 (1954), 387–428; J. Durbin and A. Stuart, 'An Experimental Comparison between Coders', *Journal of Marketing*, 19 (1954), 54–66.

[39] J. Bonham, *The Middle Class Vote* (London, 1954); M. Benney and P. Geis, 'Social Class and Politics in Greenwich', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1 (1950), 310–27; D. Butler, 'Voting Behaviour and Its Study in Britain', *British Journal of Sociology*, 6 (1955), 93–103, at 95–6; M. Benney et al., *How People Vote: A Study of Electoral Behaviour in Greenwich* (London, 1956); and D. Butler and D. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain: Forces shaping Electoral Choice* (1969; Harmondsworth, 1971), 10.

[40] J. Tyrwhitt with H. Durant and R. Glass, *Political Opinion: Four General Election Results Analysed and Presented in Maps and Tables* (London, 1949); R. Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London, 1960), 122–7, 246–60.

[41] J. Goldmann, 'Expenditure on Rent', *Bulletin of the University of Oxford Institute of Statistics*, 6 (1944), 173–7.

[42] A. Calder, 'Mass-Observation, 1937–1949', in M. Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research* (Cambridge, 1985), 121–36; P. Summerfield, 'Mass-Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20 (1985), 439–52.

[43] 'Quantitative and Qualitative Method in Sociological Research', *Nature*, 9 May 1942, 516; J. G. Ferraby, *The Limitations of Statistics in the Field of Public Opinion Research* (Manchester, 1943).

organizations had in common was forgotten as the conflict continued into the post-war years.[44] As a result, historians have come to see M-O as both a social movement and a research organization while dismissing BIPO's social purposes and portraying it as a commercial enterprise that created an 'opinionated' public.[45]

Durant appreciated that people would always question his motives and harbour suspicions about the independence of paid research. Given the institute's dominance of opinion polling, Durant also reconciled himself to sniping from post-war rivals who questioned his integrity as they battled for market share. Often, he responded in kind.[46] On at least one occasion a rival threatened libel action.[47] Nevertheless, criticism of the institute was a source of frustration at times, which might explain Durant's reluctance to dwell on the technical problems and commercial pressures he faced.

'"Fish-and-Chip" Intelligence'

Field spent several months in London, helping Durant to set up the institute. The 'Gallup method' that Field taught him was neither unique nor unprecedented. The statistician Arthur Bowley pioneered the use of the sample survey before the First World War. Although its use was rarer than in the United States, government statisticians and market researchers made increasing use of sampling during the inter-war years.[48] By 1936, the research departments of the three biggest advertising agencies J. Walter Thompson, Lintas, and London Press Exchange made regular use of the sample survey to study buying habits and advertising's effectiveness.[49] What was novel about the institute's work was that it was the first organization to use the sample survey to gauge British public opinion, and the only one to do so until 1948 when Research Services began to conduct regular polls for *Picture Post* magazine.

The 'Gallup method' encompassed a variety of survey techniques. Field taught Durant how to design a 'questionary', how to construct

[44] T. Harrisson, 'Galloping Consumption', *Fabian Quarterly*, 53 (1947), 3–6; and his, 'A British View on "Cheating" ', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 11 (1947), 172–3.

[45] Summerfield, 'Mass-Observation'; T. Osborne and N. Rose, 'Do the Social Sciences Create Phenomena? The Example of Public Opinion Research', *British Journal of Sociology*, 50 (1999), 367–96.

[46] 'Implied Rebuke by Gallup', *Manchester Guardian*, 3 February 1959, 1.

[47] 'Libel alleged in Gallup Political Report', *Financial Times*, 26 March 1964, 13; 'Rival's Libel Action against Gallup Polls settled', *Guardian*, 7 October 1964, 7.

[48] C. A. Moser, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation* (London, 1958), 18–38; G. Hoinville, 'Methodological Research on Sample Surveys: A Review of Developments in Britain', in M. Bulmer, ed., *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research* (Cambridge, 1985), 101–20.

[49] M. Abrams, *Social Surveys and Social Action* (London, 1951), 55.

quota samples, how to collect data using postal surveys and face-to-face interviews, how to process the data, and finally how to analyse, interpret, and present it. Quota sampling lay at the heart of the early 'Gallup method'. Field taught Durant to select a sample containing a specified number of people from various groups within a population. These groups were selected before the sampling took place. Together these techniques enabled BIPO to gather what the vicar of St Mary's, Beverley called '"fish-and-chip" intelligence' from the people in 'queues waiting for the second house at the cinema or the dispensing of fish and chips'.[50]

The Gallup Poll was not the finished article, however. By the time Durant sold the firm in 1963, the contents of the Gallup toolkit that Field presented to him in 1936 had expanded considerably. In 1938, Durant began experimenting with random sampling to predict by-election results. Although not used as frequently as quota sampling, the institute had amassed considerable experience in simple random and quasi-random sampling by 1951.[51] As well as expanding the range of sampling methods BIPO used, Durant also followed Gallup's lead in refining its questioning techniques. In 1947, he added Gallup's 'Quintamensional Plan of Question Design' to the toolkit.[52] A few years later this was followed by the 'Stapel Scale'.[53] Together these techniques helped BIPO to gauge how well informed and strongly held an opinion was. Together they neutered criticism of the Gallup Poll as failing to distinguish between uninformed and informed opinion, weakly and strongly held views, and don't knows from don't cares.[54]

Given all these developments, the Gallup Poll is best seen as a brand that Durant used to market a range of techniques. Durant learned some of them from Gallup, travelling to America in 1938 and 1940 to study the AIPO operation. Durant also helped Jan Stapel of the Dutch institute to develop and test the Stapel Scale after the war.[55] The two men collaborated on voting surveys too. They tested questions to sieve out non-voters and predict how 'don't knows' would vote.[56] Durant also shared results from British studies of survey techniques with others in the 'Gallup family'. Relaying British ideas about how to use opinion

[50] *Hull Daily Mail*, 11 July 1949, 5.
[51] H. Durant, 'Experiences of Random (Probability) Sampling', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 4 (1951), 765–6.
[52] Trinity College Library (Trin Coll Lib), Cambridge, Layton Papers, 92/11, BIPO, 'Gallup Devises "Master" Plan in Polling Technique', 14 May 1947.
[53] Durant, 'Gallup Poll', 105–6.
[54] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 13.
[55] 'Public Opinion Research', *International Social Science Bulletin*, 5 (1953), 560.
[56] Trin Coll Lib: Layton 92/16/2–3, H. W. Durant, 'By-elections', 10 February 1949; and 92/28/1–10, W. Gregory, 'By-election forecasts', 17 November 1950.

polls to predict the outcome of a legislative election in terms of seats was to prove the most useful, however.[57]

For practical reasons the quota sample survey conducted through face-to-face interviewing was the most frequently used tool in Durant's kit. The sample size was smaller and the process of finding interviewees easier, which made quota sampling quicker and cheaper than random sampling. Also, random sampling was prohibitively expensive for a time, as electoral registration ceased during the war.[58] At the time market researchers drew random samples of adults or householders from the electoral register.[59] As the roll dated, the chances of finding someone at a given address decreased. Interviewers had to make more and more house calls to collect the required number of responses with a concomitant rise in costs. As the institute moved into market research, another drawback of random sampling from the electoral register became apparent. BIPO could not use it to sample smaller populations defined by age, sex, and class.[60]

This reliance on quota sampling was to skew BIPO findings in minor but significant ways that undermined Durant's aspiration to record public opinion accurately. The problems began with stratification of the sample. Whether using random or quota sampling, all national surveys began by dividing the population into strata from which a sample was drawn. These stratified samples could better represent the population if the number sampled from each group was in the same proportion as the group was to the population as a whole.

The institute used standard sampling frames to stratify its national surveys. To ensure an accurate cross-section, BIPO divided Great Britain—BIPO did not cover Northern Ireland—into fourteen regions based on those used by the registrars-general. It also used official figures to ensure rural and urban areas were represented in the proportion of twenty to eighty. When determining which urban areas to survey, the institute took into account the size of settlement, distinguishing between large, medium large, medium small, and small towns on the basis of classifications used in the 1931 Census. Finally, a balance was struck between the number of Conservative, Liberal, and Labour parliamentary constituencies on the basis of the current composition of the House of Commons.[61] In post-war electoral surveys, BIPO stratified its sample by borough and county constituency

[57] Trin Coll Lib, Layton 77/169/1, H. W. Durant to Lord Layton, 2 May 1955.
[58] Local Elections and Register of Electors (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1939–44.
[59] Moser, *Survey Methods*, 124–6.
[60] Abrams, *Social Surveys and Social Action*, 56.
[61] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Polls*, 5.

and by type of constituency (uncontested seats, two-cornered contests and three-cornered contests).[62]

The reliance on these official figures to identify its sampling units imported biases into BIPO data. For example, whether BIPO classified an area as rural or urban depended on how it was governed. This administrative definition did not take factors such as population density into account. As a consequence, BIPO samples underestimated the size of Britain's urban population. When it came to analysing and interpreting survey findings, the categories employed meant BIPO muted the voice of the town while exaggerating and diluting that of the country. Equally, the institute's urban hierarchy did not take into account population density or service provision while picking sampling areas on the basis of the current make up of the House of Commons replicated the biases of an electoral system that under-represented the Labour and Liberal vote.

A wartime statistical black-out exacerbated the problem. The government ceased publication of most statistical series until after the war and cancelled the decennial census that was due to take place in 1941. Although statistical publications resumed after the war, market researchers did not have access to detailed and reliable population figures until the registrar-general published the preliminary report on the 1951 census. This meant that throughout the 1940s BIPO stratified its samples and set its quota controls using data about inter-war Britain.

Having stratified a sample, institute researchers applied quota controls to create a representative sample that reproduced a familiar vision of British society. When determining whom to interview within an area, the institute used the standard quota controls of sex, age, and social status. Working from the registrar-generals' figures, BIPO researchers calculated the relevant proportions of men and women with ease. Official figures were also used to structure the sample according to age. The number of age groups used increased from three (21–30, 30–49, and 50 and over) in 1937 to four (21–29, 30–49, 50–64, and 65 and over) by 1951. BIPO studied the views of the under 21s rarely as they did not vote.

Socio-economic grouping was the most subjective quota control, which makes it one of the most interesting as far as historians are concerned. Initially, BIPO surveys distinguished between three socio-economic groups on the basis of income: 'A, upper class, well-to-do' families in which the chief income earner received £10 or more a week, 'B, middle class, medium income' (£4 and £10 a week), and 'C, lower class, poor' (less than £4 a week). On the basis of census data from 1931, the institute used a ratio of 5As to 20Bs to 75Cs to

[62] S. J. Eldersveld, 'British Polls and the 1950 General Election', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15 (1951), 115–32, at 117.

determine its quotas.[63] The institute derived these figures from *The Home Market*, a statistical handbook compiled by London Press Exchange.[64] *The Home Market*, which went through three editions between 1936 and 1950, was the commercial researcher's bible until preliminary results of the 1951 census became available.

From 1939 the institute increased the number of social groupings to four: 'upper class', 'upper-middle class', 'lower-middle and working class', and 'very poor' categories in the ratio 5:21:59:15.[65] Here, 'very poor' was synonymous with the unemployed who Durant had long believed were a class apart.[66] Again, the institute derived its ratios from figures in the new edition of *The Home Market*.[67] Unhappy with the subdivision of grade C into C1 (£2 10s to £4 a week) and C2 (below £2 10s a week) introduced in the new edition, Durant reworked the data to arrive at his ratios.

This second image of British society, based on figures from 1937, remained unchanged until 1951, reproducing a model familiar to contemporaries. Like the earlier income grades, it projected a vision of a class society that owed much to Durant's time at the LSE studying sociology. In his doctoral thesis, Durant had divided Britain into four strata: the aristocracy, the middle-classes, the working-class, and the unemployed. Now his surveys did the same. Without official statistics to check the income grades against, critics accepted the model as a crude but sensible one as the categories used and the orders of magnitude involved tallied with their experience.[68]

The social groupings employed in the surveys skewed BIPO data more than the ratios between them. The ratio of Cs to ABs would have had to be very inaccurate to have affected the results, a point conceded by the statistician Claus Moser who disapproved of quota sampling. Far more important were the categories involved as readers drilled down into the data. The vast majority of the adult population fell into one undifferentiated category, the 'lower-middle and working class', whose opinions could not be dissected. The casual reader of a BIPO report, few of which emphasized this group's numerical importance, could be

[63] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 7; Durant, 'Finding Public Opinion'; H. Durant, *The Beveridge Report and the Public* (London, 1943), 3n1.

[64] Of four organizations studied in Moser, 'Quota Sampling', BIPO is 'D'. BMRB, Research Services, and BBC Audience Research are 'A', 'B' and 'C', respectively. Compare Moser's descriptions of socio-economic controls with those found in R. J. E. Silvey, 'Methods of Listener Research employed by the British Broadcasting Corporation', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 107 (1944), 190–230 at 192, and Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 5–6.

[65] Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 415.

[66] H. Durant, *The Problem of Leisure* (London, 1938).

[67] M. A. Abrams et al., *The Home Market: A Book of Facts about People* (2nd edn, London, 1939), 60–73, 136–46.

[68] Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 415.

forgiven for putting its views on par with 'upper class', 'upper-middle', and 'very poor' opinion.

In addition to the standard quota controls of age, sex, and socio-economic status, BIPO used special controls such as marital status if a survey required it.[69] Past voting, occupational group and trade union membership were used to create a mini-electorate in political surveys and electoral forecasts. The occupational groups chosen could be idiosyncratic. Surveying civilian attitudes to the Beveridge Report, BIPO distinguished between civil defence workers, professionals, and white-collar workers, owners of one-man businesses, factory workers, agricultural workers, and domestic servants.[70] To check and segment its socio-economic groupings, BIPO asked its field staff to record whether interviewees owned a car, a radio, or a telephone which could be checked against official statistics.[71]

Religion was a noticeable absence from the list of standard and special controls. As far as Durant was concerned, religion was no longer an important factor shaping public opinion at mid-century. While this might have been true of London, it still mattered to some.[72] Another conspicuous absence from the list of controls is race. AIPO differentiated between blacks and whites; BIPO did not. Judging by the stratification factors and quota controls BIPO used in its surveys, Durant assumed that the best predictors of people's views were their sex, age, and income. Where they lived, who they lived with, what their job was, and how they voted explained the little that the standard variables could not.

Constrained by its stratification factors, quota controls, and sample sizes, the institute discussed its data in general terms. Although Durant deemed a sample size of 2,300 adequate for a national poll,[73] he lacked confidence in the reliability of detailed breakdowns of the results. As a consequence, his vision of British society, gaps and all, was obscured. Little attempt was made to remind readers that public opinion was an aggregate of private opinions of varying strength and quality. Results tended to be discussed in terms of minority and majority opinions with majority opinions receiving more attention. Durant was aware of the dangers posed by this binary distinction, warning users of the Gallup Poll not to dismiss minority opinions as 'history is full of examples of the minority proving right. Those who interpret polls correctly will pay at least as much attention to the small percentages as to the large.'[74]

[69] Durant, *Beveridge Report*, 15.
[70] Durant, *Beveridge Report*, 14.
[71] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 6.
[72] R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), 91.
[73] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 5.
[74] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 32.

Whether clients and newspaper readers heeded his warning is hard to gauge. Certainly, the institute's copy constructed an image of the 'average Briton' who feared cancer and tuberculosis and for whom 'the cinema and the bottle are the most popular remedies for depression'.[75]

The 'Cheater' Problem

Ultimately, the energy put into survey design was wasted if the institute could not trust its interviewers to fill their quotas correctly. This human factor was as important a threat to the institute's goals as were the methodological issues discussed above. Faced with a classic 'principal-agent' problem, Durant devised a way of aligning the interviewers' interests with his own. Yet, this system, which he defended against vocal critics, could only contain the problem. If they were to fill their quotas, interviewers had to be allowed a great deal of discretion. This reliance on interviewers made it even harder for Durant to realize Gallup's vision of a democratic science.

Concern about 'cheating' bubbled up in the pages of the American journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* towards the end of the war.[76] Pollsters had become concerned about the reliability of interviews, fearing that lowly paid staff made up data to fill their quotas. This issue was lumped together with concerns about carelessness, bias, and prompting on the part of interviewers, and referred to as the 'cheater' problem. For some, the obvious solution was to create a well-paid force of full-time trained interviewers as good pay and professional status would encourage them to take an interest in their work and identify with their employers' goals.[77] This was how the British Market Research Bureau approached the problem, but it was not an option for BIPO.

For reasons of cost Durant relied upon part-time untrained interviewers. When starting out, university students and retired civil servants formed the basis of the institute's field organization.[78] Female interviewers, most of whom were housewives, came to dominate the field staff as it grew in size.[79] The institute found its interviewers by personal recommendation and membership organizations like NALGO and the WEA.[80] By 1950, BIPO had a field force of 700–800 interviewers who it paid a basic rate of 3s an hour rising to 4s an hour.

[75] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 27–30.
[76] Hoinville, 'Methodological Research', 109–11.
[77] L. P. Crespi, 'The Cheater Problem in Polling', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 9 (1945), 431–45, at 443–5.
[78] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 8.
[79] Durant and Gregory, *Behind the Gallup Poll*, 11.
[80] Durant, 'Finding Public Opinion'.

About 250–300 of these interviewers were in the field at any one time each tasked with conducting fifteen interviews per survey.[81]

The interviewers' instructions, received through the post with the fifteen forms for completion, were simple. For example, an interviewer in Holborn might receive the following directions: 'Area, Holborn: 7 men, 8 women; 2, 21-29 years, 8, 30-49 years, 5, 50 years and over; 1, upper group, 4, middle group, 10, lower group.'[82] It was left to the interviewer to find fifteen people who fitted these specifications. Guidance issued to the field staff contained further instructions. The institute recommended that interviews take place 'as near to your home as is compatible with fulfilling your quotas and getting a good mixture of the local population . . . . Nothing is to be gained by trying to cover all parts of your area. We are anxious for your sake and our own that travelling should be reduced to an absolute minimum.'[83] To maintain the integrity of the sample, people had to be interviewed separately and nobody could be interviewed in a second survey. For the same reason the staff was also instructed not to do more than three interviews per block of flats, row of houses, or factory.

Interviews took place in a range of settings as investigators scoured the area for people to fill their quotas. The timing of interviews was left to investigators so most took place in the afternoon or early evening.[84] In a typical survey, over half of interviews took place in the street.[85] Men could be stopped in the street on their way to or from work, or buttonholed during their lunch break. Interviewers looked for working-class and middle-class women out shopping, while house calls were the best way to find the wealthy. The Labour Exchange was a good place to find the unemployed. Looking for elusive male interviewees led investigators to call at offices and factories.[86]

Durant, who contributed to the debate about cheating, developed a different solution to controlling his interviewers. He stuck fast to his views when challenged by British critics of his supposed amateur army of ill-paid, prejudiced, middle-class, and middle-aged housewives.[87] His first defence against cheating was the careful recruitment of fieldworkers through personal recommendation. The next was to use call-backs to check the quality of their work. If a check revealed that an interviewer had cheated, instant dismissal followed. Durant also forged a personal relationship with his interviewers to encourage them to identify with the firm. From time to time regional briefings would be

[81] Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 419.
[82] Durant, 'Finding Public Opinion'.
[83] Cited in Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 418.
[84] Durbin and Stuart, 'Differences in Response Rates', 182.
[85] Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 417.
[86] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 10.
[87] Harrisson, 'A British View'.

held and all fieldworkers received a standing invitation to call at the London office when visiting the capital. Up to this point, he agreed with his critics. Where he differed was in the stress he placed on the importance of fieldworkers finding surveys interesting and easy to administer.[88]

Revealing an intuitive grasp of workers' psychology, no doubt based upon his experiences as a young clerk, Durant argued that full-time interviewing was demoralizing. Job satisfaction was limited as the interviewer, conducting interviews day after day, never saw a survey through from start to finish. If the majority of interviews were for a market research survey, it made it hard for interviewers to see the social value of their work. It also impoverished their social relations as 'Everything turns into its component parts and merely becomes an answer to a question.'[89] Durant felt strongly about this last point, maintaining the position that it was 'emotionally debilitating' in later years.[90]

For the occasional interviewer, especially housewives who formed the backbone of Durant's field force, his questionnaires provided a break from the routine of their everyday lives and brought them into contact with people they would not meet otherwise. This ensured their interest, while keeping surveys short and questions simple removed the temptation to avoid difficult and time-consuming interviews with the poor and uneducated.[91] By 1942, Durant had also reduced the standard survey quota from twenty-five to fifteen interviews per investigator to maintain interest and make it easier to find people.[92] He believed that all these measures made BIPO interviewers less likely to cheat than professionals.

But these measures did not eliminate fraud, bias or carelessness from the interview process. Durant admitted that the institute's electoral forecasts for the *News Chronicle* underestimated the size of the Labour vote. He attributed this to two factors: interviewers' avoidance of lengthy interviews with the poor and uneducated; and female interviewers' reluctance to interview working-class men at home. He discounted a third: workers pleasing middle-class interviewers by telling them what they thought they wanted to hear.[93] Outside observers also commented on the subjectivity of BIPO interviewers'

[88] Henry Durant, 'The ''Cheater'' Problem', Public Opinion Quarterly, 10 (1946), 289–91.
[89] Durant, 'The ''Cheater'' Problem', 290.
[90] H. Durant, 'Letters to the Editor: Opinion Polling', *Financial Times*, 5 November 1962, 4.
[91] Durant, 'Gallup Poll', 102.
[92] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 8.
[93] Pendennis, 'Table Talk', The Observer, 8 May 1955, 11; Robert McKenzie, 'A Battle of the Turn-Out', The Observer, 4 October 1959, 1.

assessments of a person's social group.[94] Guidance notes instructed interviewers to pay more attention to occupation and 'general social standing' than earnings when assessing social status despite their quotas being based on income data alone.

'The Question of Money'

Survey methods aside, money was the single biggest impediment to realizing the vision of scientific polling. The business of polling, an aspect of his work that Durant preferred not to talk about, placed important constraints on his 'fact-finding organisation'. As has been noted already, considerations of cost lay behind his preference for quota sampling over random sampling, and untrained part-time interviewers over full-time professionals. Durant admitted this publicly and mounted a robust defence of his choices against his critics. But 'the question of money' went deeper still. BIPO was a profit-making concern that conducted research on behalf of paying clients. As such, Durant was not free to choose what the institute researched, how it phrased questions, or what happened to its survey findings. This had to be negotiated with clients, but information about such negotiations is scarce as BIPO literature touched on client relations briefly if at all.

Initially, the institute concerned itself with the business of opinion polling. Following Field's advice, based on Gallup's experiences in the States, Durant began by touting his services to newspapers and magazines. His first client was *Cavalcade*, a weekly news magazine modeled on *Time*, who paid him £150 a year to conduct regular postal surveys. The 'mail ballot' meant Durant, short on start-up capital, could avoid the expense of employing part-time interviewers. It also made polling more affordable, encouraging potential clients to experiment with it. Easier and cheaper to conduct, the postal survey was more attractive to potential clients unsure about spending too much on unfamiliar and unproven sample surveys. Unfortunately, *Cavalcade* ran into financial difficulties, was sold and the BIPO contract cancelled in spring 1938.[95]

Fortunately for Durant the work of AIPO had piqued the interest of the *News Chronicle*, a London-based national daily newspaper with Liberal leanings. Its chairman and editor-in-chief Sir Walter Layton had an interest in the latest market research techniques that the Cadbury family, who owned the paper, shared.[96] Layton, well aware of the

[94] Moser, 'Quota Sampling', 415.
[95] Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 14.
[96] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 87/125/1, Laurence J. Cadbury to Sir Walter Layton, 18 November 1938.

Gallup Poll's value as infotainment in America, was keen to experiment with something that might boost the readership of his small middle-market paper.[97] This led Layton to commission BIPO to forecast the outcome of the forthcoming West Fulham parliamentary by-election as a test of the method.[98]

With Cadbury money behind it, the *News Chronicle* paid the institute to conduct costly face-to-face interviews. Working with a random sample of 500 voters taken from the electoral register, Durant predicted that the Labour candidate Dr Edith Summerskill would secure 51.6 per cent of the vote, taking the seat from the Conservatives. The result proved Durant right. Summerskill took the seat with 52.2 per cent of the vote. Impressed by the poll's accuracy, Layton and his managing editor Gerald Barry commissioned further polls, publishing the first story based on one in October 1938 and acquiring the exclusive rights to publish its finding in Great Britain and all countries in the British Empire with the exception of Canada.[99] This relationship continued until the newspaper merged with the *Daily Mail* in 1960.

The institute depended on the *News Chronicle*, its only client from 1938 to 1939, for its financial survival into the post-war years. On occasion this financial dependence compromised the Gallup Poll's integrity as Durant, a novice entrepreneur, found it hard to resist the paper's demands when they ran counter to best practice amongst pollsters. In particular, Durant found it hard to resist the demands of Laurence Cadbury, chairman of Daily News Limited, the company that owned the paper. Cadbury, who journalists considered benign by comparison to other newspaper barons, took a keen interest in the paper's editorial policy and foreign news coverage.[100] He was quick to recognize the Gallup Poll's political value. He intervened regularly in the question setting process, pressing the editor Walter Layton to ask BIPO to include questions on conscription,[101] Jewish refugees,[102] pacifism and conscientious objection,[103] rationing,[104] the cost of living,

[97] Political and Economic Planning, *Report on the British Press* (London, 1938), 227; Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission on the Press: Twenty-Fourth Day 4 March 1948 (PP 1947–48 (Cmd.7409) xv.63).
[98] Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 14.
[99] *News Chronicle*, 15 October 1938, 1; Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 4.
[100] G. Glenton and W. Pattinson, *The Last Chronicle of Bouverie Street* (London, 1963), 94.
[101] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 87/133, Laurence J. Cadbury to Sir Walter Layton, 25 March 1939.
[102] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 87/139/1, Laurence J. Cadbury to Sir Walter Layton, 30 June 1939.
[103] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 89/43/2, 'Notes on Policy Conference No. 37', 20 October 1939.
[104] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 89/44/2, 'Notes on Policy Conference No. 38', 27 October 1939.

strikes, and the party truce.[105] Durant included all three questions unamended despite biased wording that led interviewees to give the answer Cadbury desired.[106]

Publicly, Durant and the paper emphasized BIPO's independence from the *News Chronicle* and the Liberal Party, which the paper supported. Durant demonstrated his autonomy by citing results that ran counter to the paper's editorial policy. For example, the paper reported Chamberlain's healthy approval ratings after the Munich crisis, a high level of support for corporal punishment, and strong support for the BBC broadcasting dance music on a Sunday in autumn 1938.[107] But there were many more poll findings that went unreported including the institute's earliest by-election forecasts and several thereafter.

Although the institute supplied the *News Chronicle* with an interpretation of its data, Durant could not control how the paper used its findings. He had secured control of his own copy bar the headlines and subheadings, but this mattered little when the editor asked senior reporters to analyse the data instead of Durant.[108] In the run-up to the 1950 general election the paper's political correspondent A. J. Cummings provided much of the commentary on BIPO polling data supplied by Durant whose unique contribution was its visualization.[109] Durant, who was quick to criticize the misinterpretation of BIPO data in other papers, did not react when *News Chronicle* columnists or leader writers cherry-picked his data to make tendentious points. What mattered to him was ensuring that inaccurate and biased coverage was not attributed to him or the institute.

When the *News Chronicle* used BIPO results to influence political debate in directions it favoured, Durant had no objection. On the eve of the parliamentary debate of the Beveridge Report, the *News Chronicle* sent MPs copies of a pamphlet outlining the findings of a special report into public attitudes towards the report.[110] They repeated this tactic when debate about a national health service raged the following year.[111]

[105] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 89/45/2, 'Notes on Policy Conference No. 39', 3 November 1939.

[106] G. H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937–1975*, 2 vols (New York, 1976), i. 22 (July 1939).

[107] Durant, *What Britain Thinks*, 18. The data can be found in Gallup, *Great Britain*, i. 9–12 (December 1939).

[108] A. Stuart et al., 'Public Opinion Polls: A Discussion', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 142 (1979), 442—67, at 458.

[109] A. J. Cummings, 'Spotlight on Politics', *News Chronicle*, 29 and 30 November 1949.

[110] 16 February 1943.

[111] See M. Edelman, 'Do We want a State Medical Service?' *Picture Post*, 12 August 1944, in T. Hopkinson, ed., *Picture Post 1938—50* (London, 1970), 156–60; 'The Doctors' Verdict', *The Economist*, 12 August 1944, 212–3; and 'Gallup Poll on White Paper: Comparison with Council's Report', *British Medical Journal*, 2 (1944), 57–9 for more details.

After the war the paper also published polls on voting intentions during the political conference season.[112] Delegates to the Trades' Union Congress and attendees at party conferences received facsimiles of the articles. Of course, Durant did not object to these transparent attempts to influence policy. This was the point of polling, as he saw it, and majority public opinion on these issues chimed with his own.

Thanks to the rapid expansion of its market research business, the institute was better able to defend the integrity of the Gallup Poll in the face of editorial pressure after the war. Although the institute began as a journalistic enterprise owned and managed by a sole trader, it had morphed into a limited liability company engaged in market research as well as opinion surveying by 1943.[113] In this it resembled the American business model pioneered by Gallup and Elmo Roper.[114] By 1968, only 5 per cent of the firm's annual turnover of over £500,000 came from public opinion polling.[115]

This transition had begun in December 1939 when BBC Audience Research engaged BIPO to conduct the field work for its daily general listening barometer[116], but it accelerated during the war as the wartime state, hungry for information about the war economy, commissioned private firms to conduct market research on its behalf. Political pressure prevented the Ministry of Information from commissioning BIPO to monitor civilian morale, much to officials' chagrin,[117] but surveys to help the Ministry of Food[118] and Board of Trade[119] to better understand demand for rationed goods was less controversial. Increasingly dependent on wartime government research contracts, the institute looked to replace them with commercial work once the war ended. Gallup came to the rescue, pushing commercial work Durant's way after Young and Rubicam, the advertising agency he had worked for since 1932, opened a London

[112] For example, *News Chronicle*, 4 October 1950, 1 and 14 October 1950, 1.

[113] Companies House, Cardiff, Company No. 381201, 'Certificate of Incorporation' and 'Memoranda and Articles of Association', 17 June 1943.

[114] Igo, 'A Gold Mine', 112—7.

[115] 'Business Diary: Moving up at Gallup', *The Times*, 17 October 1968, 29.

[116] H. Durant and R. Durant, 'Lord Haw-Haw of Hamburg: His British Audience', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 4 (1940), 443–50; S. Nicholas, *The Good Servant: The Origins and Development of BBC Listener Research 1936–1950*, 2006 <http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk/guides/9781851171248.php> accessed 11 April 2011.

[117] TNA: PRO, INF 1/261, A. P. Waterfield to Lord Hugh Macmillan, 27 September 1939 and J. Hilton to H. Durant, 12 October 1939.

[118] W. F. F. Kemsley, 'Weight and Height of a Population in 1943', *Annals of Eugenics*, 15 (1950), 161–83; W. F. F. Kemsley, 'Changes in Body Weight from 1943 to 1950', *Annals of Eugenics*, 18 (1953), 22–42; J. M. Harries and D. F. Hollingsworth, 'Food Supply, Body Weight, and Activity in Great Britain, 1943–9', *British Medical Journal*, 1 (1953), 75–8.

[119] C. A. Moser, 'The Use of Sampling in Great Britain', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 44 (1949), 231–59, at 253.

office in 1944.[120] Thanks to Gallup, diversification worked. Within a few years, 70 per cent of the firm's business came from six clients: the British advertising agency S. H. Benson, Ford Motor Company, the *News Chronicle*, B. P. & Philips, and the British Travel Association.[121]

Social Survey's market research work impacted on Durant's aspirations for BIPO's Gallup Poll in two ways, one negatively and the other positively. First, consumer surveys and opinion polls were often conducted at the same time. Faced with an increasing number of requests for small one-off consumer surveys, Durant incorporated the questions into his monthly *News Chronicle* surveys with the Daily News's permission.[122] The effects of mixing market research and opinion polling in a monthly omnibus survey are hard to gauge, especially as surviving data rarely preserve the exact question order used.[123] Nevertheless, questions about voting intentions and approval ratings tended to come at the end of the monthly omnibus. Prefacing these questions with questions about personal experiences of crime and the desire to emigrate, as happened in March 1948 when there was a noticeable dip in support for the Prime Minister, his government, and party, was unlikely to solicit positive feelings towards Labour.[124] This was not the case with election surveys that focused on voting alone.

Secondly, and more importantly, growing income from market research decreased Durant's dependence on the *News Chronicle* contract. This allowed him to assert his independence. By the late 1940s, the relationship with the paper was hindering the business's development. With only one sister paper, *The Star*, the tie up with the *News Chronicle* restricted the circulation of the Gallup Poll. A deal struck with United Newspapers to carry results in five provincial evening newspapers proved short lived.[125] After proving its worth with a successful general election forecast, the Gallup Poll had become a valuable asset, setting the *News Chronicle* apart from its rivals. The Daily News board stood on its contractual rights, vetoing Durant's request for permission to conduct a quarterly poll on behalf of *News Review* magazine.[126] It also enforced strict rules about secondary reporting.

[120] *Advertisers' Weekly*, 12 June 1945; Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 15.
[121] Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 15.
[122] Chappell, 'Founding Fathers', 157 (1979), 14; Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 92/31/2, F. B. Smart to H. W. Durant, 25 September 1951.
[123] See Gallup, *Great Britain 1937–1975*, for an incomplete collection of results from the monthly omnibus survey in which the questions are jumbled up.
[124] Gallup, *Great Britain*, i. 170–2, and A. King and R. J. Wybrow, eds, *British Political Opinion, 1937–2000: The Gallup Polls* (London, 2001), 2, 165, 185.
[125] The papers were the *Edinburgh Evening News*, *Yorkshire Evening News* (Leeds), *Chronicle and Echo* (Northampton), *Lancashire Daily Post* (Preston), and the *Hull Daily Mail*. See Durant, *Beveridge Report*, 2, and W. Berry, Viscount Camrose, *British Newspapers and Their Controllers* (London, 1947), 90–3.
[126] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 92/13, Lord Layton to H. W. Durant, 19 May 1947.

The balance of power shifted once rival papers showed an interest in commissioning Durant to produce polls for them after he called the 1950, 1951, and 1955 elections successfully. The Daily News agreed to pay Durant more to retain the services of the firm with 'the most consistent, accurate record on election forecasting of any polling organisation in the world'.[127] They also relaxed their attitudes towards secondary reporting with *The Economist* amongst others carrying poll graphics courtesy of the *News Chronicle*.[128] Now Durant felt able to resist requests from Laurence Cadbury to ask what he considered leading questions. The paper gave way when Durant changed a leading question put by Cadbury,[129] the assistant editor noting in a letter to the editor that 'We most certainly do not want to lose Gallup Poll and therefore in view of competitive offers must act with discretion.'[130] To maintain good relations with Durant, the Daily News board had already agreed to pay him more for the Gallup Poll and hired Social Surveys to conduct its market research.[131]

Reluctant to pass up on the opportunity to grow the polling business, Durant founded a new company, Forecasting (Statistics) Limited, to get around his contractual obligations to the *News Chronicle*. The new firm, managed by Theodore Schlesinger, conducted polls for the *Daily Telegraph* using Social Surveys staff and equipment. The Daily News board did not learn of this arrangement until an investigative reporter exposed it three years later.[132] The board was in no position to object as *News Chronicle* sales dwindled, and allowed Durant to start up the Gallup Political Index, a monthly subscription service, in January 1960 without demur.

When the *News Chronicle* collapsed in 1961, Durant seized the opportunity to renegotiate his relationship with the press from a position of strength. The Gallup Poll remained the market leader despite the emergence of rival polls. In fact, the firm's nearest rival National Opinion Polls paid Social Surveys to conduct its fieldwork and data processing during the 1959 election.[133] Michael Berry, owner of the *Daily Telegraph*, had wanted to prise the Gallup Poll away from the *News Chronicle* since taking control of the paper in 1954. Having commissioned Durant's firm to conduct their polls anonymously for

[127] *The Observer*, 3 July 1955, 3.
[128] 'The Election of 1955: The Unreliable Voter', *The Economist*, 23 April 1955, 269.
[129] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 92/34, N. S. Cursley to L. J. Cadbury, 9 December 1955; Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 92/36/1–2, N. S. Cursley to M. H. Curtis, 12 December 1955; Gallup, *Opinion Polls*, i. 365.
[130] Trin Coll Lib, Layton, 92/36/1–2, N. S. Cursley to M. H. Curtis, 12 December 1955.
[131] Trin Coll Lib: Layton, 92/25, F. B. Smart, 'Gallup Poll Contract', September1950; and, Layton, 92/31/1, F. B. Smart to H. W. Durant, 25 September 1951; *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1951, 7.
[132] M. Arnold-Foster, 'Four Polls from One Source', *The Observer*, 20 September 1959, 1.
[133] Arnold-Foster, 'Four Polls'.

several years, the paper could now acquire exclusive publishing rights to the most trusted polling brand. In return, Durant asserted his right to control all commentary on his poll and continue his subscription service.

Although the relationship with the *Daily Telegraph* was more equal than that with the *News Chronicle*, Durant still had no say over survey topics and had to negotiate question wording. At times his financial dependence on the *News Chronicle* had led him to compromise the integrity of the Gallup Poll. The growth of the market research business reduced this threat, but brought new problems with it such as the cross-contamination of polling data and market research data in the omnibus survey. When these problems are combined with the financial pressures that led Durant to compromise his survey methods, the problem of money became an intractable obstacle to realizing his social aims.

When Durant's career ended in 1963, it was commonplace to suggest that polls shaped rather than reflected opinion. Worries about feedback effects, whether positive 'bandwagon' or negative 'boomerang' effects, surfaced in the wake of the 1966 general election, which prompted the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Laws to recommend a ban on reporting poll results and betting odds during the seventy-two hours before polls closed.[134] Such criticism did not concern Durant or the next generation of pollsters. In fact, feedback effects were to be welcomed as they showed that voters and politicians watched the polls carefully and reacted to them. This, after all, was Durant's intention when he founded the institute. Like his mentor George Gallup, Durant believed in the sample survey's democratic potential. The opinion poll and the consumer survey gave voters and shoppers a voice that political parties and businesses could not afford to ignore. Durant, a life-long Labour supporter, gave this populist vision a social democratic slant for British audiences. His deep faith prompted him to help Gallup spread his gospel to other liberal democracies.

This vision rested upon the sample survey, but the 'psychological X-ray' was far from perfect. Stratified sampling, common to both random and quota sampling as practiced by BIPO, imported biases found in census data. The statistical blackout during the war exacerbated the problem. As a result, BIPO continued to poll a representative cross-section of British society as it was in 1931 well into the 1950s. The additional controls used in quota sampling had a similar effect. The choice of stratification factors and quota controls dictated how BIPO and others interpreted its findings, blinding them to other

[134] Conference on Electoral Law: Letter dated 24 April 1967 from Mr. Speaker to the Prime Minister (1966–67 (Cmnd. 3275) xxvii.423), 4.

factors such as religion or race. It also reflected the view that sex, age, and income determined one's attitudes and beliefs in mid-century Britain. The little variation that these factors could not explain was explained in terms of where a person lived, who they lived with, what their job was, and how they voted. Finally, the reliance on face-to-face interviews presented BIPO with further problems. Quota sampling exacerbated the 'cheater' problem as it required interviewers to exercise considerable discretion in finding interviewees. Durant, who tackled these problems in professional fora, brushed them aside when addressing wider audiences.

The fact that the firm was a profit-making concern introduced further obstacles to the realization of a democratic science of polling. Rarely did Durant get the opportunity to design and conduct a survey in the way he would wish. His clients' time and cost constraints led him to rely on quota sampling and untrained, part-time interviewers. For the social theorists Jürgen Habermas and Pierre Bourdieu, opinion polls allow the political and commercial elites to manufacture, monitor, control, and channel opinion.[135] In practice, this involved BIPO asking questions that suited the Liberal editorial policy of the *News Chronicle* and its Quaker owners the Cadbury family. While this compromised the poll's integrity on occasion, it fell far short of controlling or channelling opinion as politicians paid little attention to polls until the 1950s. By that point, income from market research and interest from rival newspapers allowed Durant to resist the paper's demands that he disagreed with. It also gave him the money to pursue his personal research interests. Nevertheless, the need to balance cost and quality remained—a dilemma faced by academic and professional survey researchers alike. Gallup's vision of democratic science of polling, which had inspired Durant to found BIPO in 1937, had proven impossible to realize in practice. The instrument contained irredeemable flaws, while commercial pressures forced Durant to wield it hastily.

[135] J. Habermas, 'The Scientization of Politics and Public Opinion', in his *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*, trans. J. J. Shapiro (London, 1971), 62–80; P. Bourdieu, 'Public Opinion Polls: A Science without a Scientist', in his *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. M. Adamson (Cambridge, 1990), 168–74.